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## SOME FEATURES OF OVID'S STYLE: II. THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT IN THE *METAMORPHOSES*<sup>1</sup>

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A stage setting with appropriate scenery, actors with their entrances and exits, their costumes, their actions, and their lines—these form the invariable and indispensable elements, the *materia dramatis*, of playwrights of all time. But while these elements are necessary to the formal drama, poetry of every kind has always had a touch, in spirit at least, of the dramatic, and, while not professedly dramatic in form, still exhibits many if not all the elements of dramatic technique which we have named above.

One cannot read the odes of Horace without feeling their dramatic character. The satires of the first book are full of sudden dramatic rallies between Horace and some quick-summoned interlocutor; while the famous ninth, the "Bore" satire, is every word either stage setting, stage directions, or lines of the several well-marked characters. All the satires of the second book, except the second and sixth, are in the style of formal dialogue.

While epic poetry is universally narrative in form, it is essentially dramatic in character. It has its stage, its actors, its action, its lines. The epic is a drama on gigantic scale; its acts are years or centuries; its actors, heroes; its stage, the world of life; its events, those mighty circles of activity that leave their deep impress on human history. Homer's epics re-enact the stirring scenes of the ten years' siege of Troy, and the perilous, long wanderings of Ulysses before he reached his home; Vergil's epic action embraces the fall of Troy and the never-ending struggle of Aeneas and his band of exiles till Troy should rise again in the Western world; Tasso pictures the heroic war of Godfrey and his crusaders, who strove to free the holy city of Jerusalem; and Milton, ignoring all

<sup>1</sup> Read at the sixteenth annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South.

bounds of space and time, fills his triple stage of heaven, earth, and hell with angels, men, and devils, all working out the most stupendous problems of human destiny.

Such gigantic dramas could be presented on no human stage, but in them all are lesser actions of marked dramatic possibilities. Notable among these are the events culminating in the death of Hector, the home-coming of Ulysses and his destruction of the suitors, Satan's rebellion and expulsion from heaven, and the temptation and fall of man. All these furnish abundant material for the tragic stage; but all leave much to be supplied of speech and action before the full-rounded drama could take form. In the *Aeneid* alone is found, among the minor parts which make up the epic whole, a dramatic action well-nigh complete—the love story of Aeneas and Dido.

Now the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, on which the present study is largely based, is not an epic poem, since it is lacking in certain essential characteristics of that form of poetry. It is, however, a great and notable narrative poem in which Ovid attempts no less a task than the linking together into one artistically harmonious whole all the stories of classical mythology. And this he does, until the whole range of wonders (miraculous changes) is passed in review, from the dawn of creation, when chaos was changed by divine fiat into the orderly universe, down to the very age of the poet himself, when the soul of Julius Caesar was changed to a star and set in the sky among the immortals.

These stories had been often told and by many writers in both Greek and Latin during the centuries preceding Ovid's time, but never in the lively style of a past-master in the art of story telling as in the present instance. Ovid is a born dramatist. In his own fashion (*Amores* i. 18) he tells us how he had forced himself for a time to give up the poetry of love and to assume the more noble rôle of the tragic writer; and again (*Amores* iii. 1) under the form of an allegorical strife between Elegeia and Tragoedia, he represents the conflicting influences under which he wrought. He did, indeed, compose one tragedy on the much-used theme of Medea, a tragedy which was given high rank by such critics as Quintilian and Tacitus.

Aside from formal drama, however, the dramatic style characterizes all he writes; he sees all situations with the eye of the playwright, and for these he sets his imaginary stage. Indeed, Ovid's stage-setting habit is one of the noticeable characteristics of his narrative style. Not once alone but a score of times does he deliberately set his stage and describe his scene for the action that is to follow. So, after the story of Daphne, daughter of Peneus, the river-god, the next story of Io is thus introduced (i. 568 ff.):

There is a vale in Thessaly which steep-wooded slopes surround on every side. Men call it Tempe. Through this the river Peneus flows from the foot of Pindus with foam-flecked waters, and by its heavy fall forms clouds which drive along fine, smoke-like mist, sprinkles the tops of the trees with spray, and deafens even remoter regions by its roar. Here is the home, the seat, the inmost haunt of the mighty stream. Here, seated in a cave of overhanging rock, he was giving laws to his waters, and to his water-nymphs. Hither came, first, the rivers of his own country, not knowing whether to congratulate or console the father of Daphne: the poplar-fringed Sperchios, the restless Enipeus, hoary Apidanus, gentle Amphrysos and Aeas; and later all the rivers which, by whatsoever way their current carries them, lead down their waters, weary with wandering, into the sea. *Inachus only does not come*; but, hidden away in his deepest cave, he augments his waters with his tears, and in utmost wretchedness laments his daughter, Io, as lost. He knows not whether she still lives or is among the shades. But, since he cannot find her anywhere, he thinks she must be nowhere, and his anxious soul forbodes things worse than death.

*Inachus only does not come.* It is on this cue that the first scene, as in a moving-picture film, dissolves into the next—the scene of the seduction of Io by Jupiter.

A similar quick transformation from scene to scene is found at the opening of the twelfth book:

Father Priam, not knowing that Aesacus is still alive in feathered form, mourned for his son. At an empty tomb also, inscribed with the lost one's name, Hector with his brothers had offered sacrifices in honor of the dead. *Paris was not present at the sad rite*, Paris, who had a little later brought a long-continued war upon his country with his stolen wife. A thousand ships and the whole Pelasgian race, banded together, pursued him; nor would vengeance have been postponed had not stormy winds made the sea impassable, and had not the land of Boeotia kept the ships, though ready to set sail, at fish-haunted Aulis.

And here again, by that cue of *Paris was not present at the sad rite*, the scene of the funeral of Aesacus at Troy has dissolved into the briefly told tragedy of Iphigenia at Aulis.

We have a more elaborate stage setting in the story of Phaëthon, who on his mother's advice goes to the home of the sun-god on the far eastern edge of the world, in order to learn whether or no he is the son of the god of light. This scene is described in great detail, even to the costuming in a bright purple robe of the central character.

The palace of the Sun stood high on lofty columns, bright with glittering gold and bronze that shone like fire. Gleaming ivory crowned the gables above; the double folding-doors were radiant with burnished silver. And the workmanship was more beautiful than the material. For upon the doors Mulciber had carved in relief the waters that enfold the central earth, the circle of the lands and the sky that overhangs the lands. The sea holds the dark-hued gods: tuneful Triton, changeful Proteus, and Aegaeon, his strong arms thrown over a pair of huge whales; Doris and her daughters, some of whom are shown swimming through the water, some sitting on a rock drying their green hair, and some riding on fishes. They have not all the same appearance, and yet not altogether different; as it should be with sisters. The land has men and cities, woods and beasts, rivers, nymphs and other rural deities. Above these scenes was placed a representation of the shining sky, six signs of the zodiac on the right-hand doors, and six signs on the left.

Now when Clymene's son had mounted the steep path which leads thither, and had come beneath the roof of his sire whose fatherhood had been questioned, straightway he turned him to his father's face, but halted some little space away; for he could not bear the radiance at a nearer view. Clad in a purple robe, Phoebus sat on his throne gleaming with brilliant emeralds. To right and left stood Day and Month and Year and Century, and the Hours, set at equal distances. Young Spring was there, wreathed with a floral crown; Summer, lightly clad, with garland of ripe grain; Autumn was there, stained with the trodden grape, and icy Winter with white and grizzled locks [ii. 1 ff.].

And now enters Phaëthon, dazzled with the glory of the place, yet stoutly bent upon his quest; and upon this brilliant stage the first scene of the ensuing action is portrayed.

Similarly we have described (iii. 155 ff.) the beautiful grotto of Gargaphie, Diana's bathing-pool, the scene of the first act in the tragedy of the ill-fated Actaeon.

There was a vale in that region, thick grown with pine and cypress with their sharp needles. 'Twas called Gargaphie, the sacred haunt of high-girt Diana. In its most secret nook there was a well-shaded grotto, wrought by no artist's hand. But Nature by her own cunning had imitated art; for she had shaped a native arch of the living rock and soft tufa. A sparkling spring with its slender stream bubbled up on one side and widened out into a pool with grassy banks.

Also the action of Peleus' wooing of the sea-goddess Thetis is preceded by a minute description of the scene (xi. 229 ff.):

There is a bay on the Thessalian coast, curved like a sickle into two bays with arms running out; 'twould be a safe port for ships if the water were deeper. The sea spreads smooth over the sandy bottom; the shore is firm, such as leaves no trace of feet, delays no journey, is free from seaweed. A myrtle wood grows close at hand, thick-hung with two-coloured berries. There is a grotto in this grove, whether made by nature or art one may not surely say, but rather by art. To this grotto oftentimes, riding thy bridled dolphin, O Thetis, naked wast thou wont to come.

Instances might be multiplied in illustration of this point. One more, however, will suffice. Ovid's most elaborate preparation for the action of his story is made in the Pyramus and Thisbe tale. Not alone the stage scenery but other necessary stage properties are carefully provided before the main action, without any one of which the events of the story could not happen: Ninus' tomb must be there, for into it Thisbe is to run and hide at sight of the lioness; a veil or cloak or loose "garment" of some kind must be on hand, for it is on the dropping of this in her flight that the whole story hinges (we are reminded of Kipling's "Don't forget the suspenders, best beloved"); there must be a spring of water to which the thirsty lioness must be attracted; there must be a moon by whose light she may see and playfully mangle the lost veil with her bloody mouth; and there must be a mulberry tree whose white fruit is to be changed to red by the blood of Pyramus (iv. 93 ff.).

Now Thisbe, carefully opening the door, steals out through the darkness, seen of none, and arrives duly at the tomb with her face well veiled and sits down under the trysting-tree. Love made her bold. But see! here comes a lioness, her jaws all dripping with the blood of fresh-slain cattle, to slake her thirst at the neighboring spring. Far off under the rays of the moon Babylonian

Thisbe sees her, and flees with trembling feet into the deep cavern, and as she flees she leaves her cloak on the ground behind her. When the savage lioness has quenched her thirst by copious draughts of water, returning to the woods she comes by chance upon the light garment (but without the girl herself!) and tears it with bloody jaws. Pyramus, coming out a little later, sees the tracks of the beast plain in the deep dust and grows deadly pale at the sight. But when he saw the cloak smeared with blood, he cried: "One night shall bring two lovers to death. But she of the two was more worthy of long life; on my head lies all the guilt. Oh, I have been the cause of your death, poor girl, in that I bade you come forth by night into this dangerous place, and did not myself come hither first. Come, rend my body and devour my guilty flesh with your fierce fangs, O all ye lions who have your lairs beneath this cliff! But 'tis a coward's part merely to pray for death." He picks up Thisbe's cloak and carries it to the shade of the trysting-tree. And while he kisses the familiar garment and bedews it with his tears he cries: "Drink now my blood too." So saying, he drew the sword which he wore girt about him, plunged the blade into his side, and straightway, with his dying effort, drew the sword from his warm wound. As he lay stretched upon the earth the spouting blood leaped high; just as when a pipe has broken at a weak spot in the lead and through the small hissing aperture sends spurting forth long streams of water, cleaving the air with its jets. The fruit of the tree, sprinkled with the blood, was changed to a dark red color; and the roots, soaked with his gore, also tinged the hanging berries with the same purple hue.

And now comes Thisbe from her hiding-place, still trembling, but fearful also that her lover will miss her; she seeks for him both with eyes and soul, eager to tell him how great perils she has escaped. And while she recognizes the place and the shape of the well-known tree, still the color of its fruit mystifies her. She doubts if it be this. While she hesitates, she sees somebody's limbs writhing on the bloody ground, and starts back, paler than boxwood, and shivering like the sea when a slight breeze ruffles its surface. But when after a little while she recognizes her lover, she smites her innocent arms with loud blows of grief, and tears her hair; and embracing the well-beloved form, she fills his wounds with tears, mingling these with his blood. And as she kissed his lips, now cold in death, she wailed: "O my Pyramus, what mischance has reft you from me? Pyramus! answer me. 'Tis your dearest Thisbe calling you. Oh, listen, and lift your drooping head!" At the name of Thisbe, Pyramus lifted his eyes, now heavy with death, and having looked upon her face, closed them again.

Now when she saw her own cloak and his sword and empty scabbard, she said: "'Twas your own hand and your love, poor boy, that took your life. I, too, have a hand brave for this one deed; I, too, have love. This shall give me strength for the fatal blow. I will follow you in death, and men shall say that I was the most wretched cause and comrade of your fate. And you,

who could have been parted from me by death alone, not even death shall part from me. O wretched parents, mine and his, be ye entreated of this by the prayers of us both, that you begrudge us not that we, whom faithful love, whom the hour of death has joined, should be laid together in the same tomb. And do you, O tree, who now shade with your branches the poor body of one, and soon will shade two, keep the marks of our death and always bear your fruit of a dark color, meet for mourning, as a monument of our double death." She spoke, and fitting the point beneath her breast, she fell forward on the sword which was still warm with her lover's blood. Her prayers touched the gods and touched the parents; for the color of the mulberry fruit is dark red when it is ripe, and all that remained from both funeral pyres rests in a common urn.

The success of Ovid's exceedingly dramatic telling of this story is attested by the use of it by later writers. It was no task at all to lift this dramatic story into a formal drama.

Another piece of stage business, whose use in Ovid is so frequent as to become almost a commonplace, is the matter of the entrances of his characters upon the scene of action.<sup>1</sup> Thus, when the Theban women have decked the temples with laurel wreaths and are now burning incense in the altar flames and are praying to Latona—"Ecce venit comitum Niobe celeberrima turba" (vi. 165):

But lo! comes Niobe, thronged about with a numerous following, a notable figure in Phrygian robes wrought with threads of gold, and beautiful as far as anger suffered her to be; and she tosses her shapely head with the hair falling on either shoulder.

The poet might, after the manner of a dull narrator, have introduced this character in a prosy way, which would merely have secured her entrance. But in consequence of this dramatic introduction we see rather than hear of the approach of Niobe.

Again we are sitting on the great natural amphitheater of hills in Cholchis, overlooking the field of Mars, where Jason's valor is to meet the test of subduing to the plow the fire-breathing bulls—"Ecce adamanteis Vulcanum naribus efflant auripedes tauri" (vii. 104 ff.):

The next dawn had put to flight the twinkling stars. Then the throngs gathered into the sacred field of Mars and took their stand on the heights.

<sup>1</sup> This entrance is regularly indicated by *ecce*, which, while it is used by Ovid in its simple adverbial meaning also, more frequently has this interjectional force indicating the entrance of an actor upon the scene.



In the midst of the company sat the king himself, clad in purple, and conspicuous with his ivory scepter. See! here come the brazen-footed bulls, breathing fire from nostrils of adamant. The very grass shrivels up at the touch of their hot breath.

So comparatively insignificant a thing as costuming Ovid does not overlook. We are repeatedly reminded that Thisbe wore a disguising veil or robe (variously called *velamen*, *tenuis amictus*, *vestis*), for it is upon the dropping of this garment, its bloody mouching by the lioness, its after finding by the lover, that the action of the whole play turns. In the lively dramatic variation of the strife in music between Pan and Phoebus, the latter's costume and stage pose are thus described:

Phoebus' golden head was wreathed with laurel of Parnassus, and his mantle, dipped in Tyrian dye, swept the ground. His lyre, inlaid with gems and Indian ivory, he held in his left hand, while his right hand held the plectrum. *His very pose was that of the artist* [xi. 165 ff.].

Circe also is thus costumed (xiv. 261 ff.): "She sat in a beautiful retreat on her throne of state, clad in a gleaming purple robe with a golden veil above." Similarly (to turn a moment from the *Metamorphoses* to *Fasti* (ii. 105) Arion is costumed for his supposed last act in life: "He takes the crown which would well become thy looks, O Phoebus, and has already donned his flowing robe twice dipped in Tyrian dye."

Ovid further vivifies and dramatizes his narrative by his frequent use of the trick of apostrophe, by means of which some person far distant or even long since dead is suddenly introduced into our presence as we listen to the story. Following are a few out of numerous illustrations:<sup>2</sup>

She, indeed, would have wished not so to do, but *thee also she then bore, thou huge Python, thou snake hitherto unknown*, who wast a terror to new-created men; so huge a space of mountain-side didst thou fill [i. 438 ff.].

He indeed can seem to have merited his punishment because of his tattling tongue. But, daughters of Acheloüs, why have you the feathers and feet of birds, though you still have maidens' features? Is it because, when Proserpina was gathering the spring flowers, *you were among the number of her*

<sup>2</sup> So also are apostrophized the Nile (i. 728), Dercetis of Babylon (iv. 44), Minerva (754), Lampetides (v. 111), Polydectes (242), Hyacinthus (x. 162, 185), Adonis (543), Thetis (xi. 237), Cyllarus (xii. 393), Philoctetes (xiii. 329).

*companions, ye Sirens, skilled in song?* After you had sought in vain for her through all the lands, that the sea also might know your search, you prayed that you might float on paddling wings above the waves: you found the gods ready, and suddenly you saw your limbs covered with golden plumage. But, that you might not lose your tuneful voices, so soothing to the ear, and that rich dower of song, maiden features, and human voice remained [v. 552 ff.].

Then did the Greeks congratulate the victorious youth, catching him in their arms and clinging to him in eager embraces. *You also, barbarian maiden*, would gladly have embraced the victor; but modesty stood in the way. Still, you would have embraced him; but respect for common talk held you back. But what was allowed you did, gazing on him with silent joy and thanking your spells and the gods who gave them [vii. 144 ff.].

In several instances this dramatic use of apostrophe develops into an unusually realistic situation. We have all heard of the little boy who, from his seat in the audience, watching Siegfried in his search for Brunhilde hemmed by the magic fires, became so interested in the hero's search that, forgetful of his surroundings, forgetful that it was only a make-believe scene that he was witnessing, shouted out: "See, Siegfried, there she is!" So Ovid sometimes seems to forget that it is only a story which he himself is telling, and, suddenly dropping the narrative style, suddenly forgetting us, his hearers, he cries out to a character on his mimic stage as did the little boy. That the story-teller does thus forget his story of course we do not think; but since by this device he makes us forget and share his own intense enthusiasm, we more appreciate the art that produces this effect. Instances in illustration of this point are, first, in the story of Narcissus (iii. 432 ff.).

How often did he plunge his arms into the water seeking to clasp the neck he sees there, but did not clasp himself in them! What he sees he knows not; but that which he sees he burns for, and the same delusion mocks and allures his eyes. *O fondly foolish boy*, why vainly seek to clasp a fleeting image? What you seek is nowhere; but turn yourself away, and the object of your love will be no more. That which you behold is but the shadow of a reflected form and has no substance of its own. With you it comes, with you it stays, and it will go with you—if you can go.

The effect of this device is to make the reader forget that this is but a tale that is told; he also, with the poet himself, is by the side of the pool watching the sufferings of the pitiable, pale youth, and eager to disabuse him of his foolish but fatal fancy.

Again in the story of Procris and Cephalus (*Ars Amatoria* iii. 735 ff.) we are watching with breathless interest the poor, jealous wife, who lurks in the thicket, expecting, dreading, to see proof of the story of her husband's unfaithfulness to her. When she hears his words to her supposed rival, who is nothing after all but the gentle zephyr, "Aura," whom the tired and heated youth is calling to his breast, the wife starts up with relief and joy to run to her husband's arms; but he, hearing a rustling in the thicket, and naturally thinking it to be some beast of prey, snatches up his spear. Then in our eager interest we also cry out with the poet: "What are you doing, unhappy youth? That is no beast! Restrain your spear! Ah, woe! 'tis your young wife your spear has pierced!"

The story of Cephalus and Procris is told again in the *Metamorphoses* (vii. 796 ff.); but, while it is there told at much greater length, this intrusion by the poet himself does not occur, for the obvious reason, for one thing, that Cephalus and not Ovid is in this instance telling the story.

Two striking illustrations of the same device occur in the *Fasti* (ii. 101, 102). The captain and sailors of the ship that bears Arion have conspired to kill their passenger and steal his gold. At the critical moment when the deadly sword is lifted the poet himself cries out: "What have you to do with swords? O captain, steer your wavering ship; such arms as this your fingers should not grasp!"

And still better (l. 386), when a slave is about to kill the infant twins, Ovid cries again: "What are you about? One of these boys is going to be Romulus!"

Since Ovid so vividly sets his scenes and so dramatically introduces his characters, we should expect their lines to be worthy of such setting and such introduction. And in this we are not disappointed. It is in just this matter of the lines that the poet's dramatic art is most admirable. This has already been illustrated in the Pyramus and Thisbe story. A shorter and livelier little skit, with appropriate scene, action, and lines, can be lifted right out of the story of Echo and Narcissus. The nymph has just been deprived by Juno of the power of speech except by way of the

repetition of final words. Upon the heels of this disaster and with this sad handicap, she falls in love and the little drama follows (iii. 370 ff.):

Now when she saw Narcissus wandering through the fields, she was inflamed with love and followed him by stealth; and the more she followed, the more she burned by a nearer flame; as when quick-burning sulphur, smeared round the tops of torches, catches fire from another fire brought near. Oh, how often does she long to approach him with alluring words and make soft prayers to him! But her nature forbids this, nor does it permit her to begin; but as it allows, she is ready to await the sounds to which she may give back her own words. By chance the boy, separated from his faithful companions, had cried: "Is anyone here?" and "Here!" cried Echo back. Amazed, he looks around in all directions and with loud voice cries "Come!"; and "Come!" she calls him calling. He looks behind him and, seeing no one coming, calls again: "Why do you run from me?" and hears in answer his own words again. He stands still, deceived by the answering voice, and "Here let us meet," he cries. Echo, never to answer other sound more gladly, cries: "Let us meet"; and to help her own words she comes forth from the woods that she may throw her arms around the neck she longs to clasp. But he flees at her approach and, fleeing, says: "Hands off! embrace me not! May I die before I give you power o'er me!" "I give you power o'er me!" she says, and nothing more. Thus spurned, she lurks in the woods, hides her shamed face among the foliage, and lives from that time on in lonely caves.

The longest and most formal, as well as the most impressive of these dramatic narratives (or rather, dramas in narrative) is the contest between Ulysses and Ajax for the glorious armor of the dead Achilles. The stage is carefully set with the Greek chiefs sitting as judges of the contest; then comes the introduction, first of the huge Ajax, representative of the might of brawn, swayed by passion and careless of effect, and later of Ulysses, calm and shrewd, relying on the arts of oratory and with an eye constantly to its effect upon his judges. Each speaks at length and in perfect character.

Ovid has a deep understanding and appreciation of the human emotions and shows a wonderful facility in their expression. These emotions are for the most part those of unhappiness, ranging all the way from thwarted love (his loves are nearly always hopeless loves), hate, jealousy, to the petrifying misery of utter

bereavement. While these emotional passages are found in dialogue form, as illustrated in the Echo story, they are preponderatingly in the form of a soliloquy expressive of a struggle between conflicting emotions, the best example of which to the English reader would be the so-called "soliloquy" of Hamlet. Perhaps the best illustration of these soul-searching speeches in Ovid is that of Medea, that barbarous, untutored princess, to whose father's court the heroic young Jason has just come. Love has crept unknown into her heart, love, of whose very existence she has scarcely heard. Her struggle is between love and duty. She thus communes with herself, fighting this strange mood (vii. 11 ff.):<sup>1</sup>

*Medea:* In vain, Medea, do you struggle; some god or other is opposing you. I wonder if this is not what is called love, or at least something like this. For why do the mandates of my father seem too harsh?

*Herself:* They certainly are too harsh.

*Medea:* Why do I fear lest he perish whom I have but now seen for the first time? What is the cause of all this fear? Come, thrust from your maiden breast these flames you feel, if you can, unhappy girl.

*Herself:* Ah, if I could, I should be more myself. But some strange power crushes me though I would not. Desire persuades me one way, reason another. I see the better and approve it, but I follow the worse.

*Medea:* Why do you, a princess, burn for a stranger, and think upon marriage with a foreign world? This land also can give you something to love. Whether he live or die is in the lap of the gods.

*Herself:* Yet may he live! This I may pray for even without loving him. For what has Jason done? Who that is not heartless would not be moved by Jason's youth, his noble birth, his manhood? Who, though the rest were lacking, would not be touched by his beauty? Certainly he has touched my heart. But unless I help him he will be breathed on by the bulls' fiery breath, and he will have to meet an enemy of his own sowing sprung from the earth, or he will be given as prey like any wild beast to the greedy dragon. If I permit this, then shall I confess that I am the child of a tigress and that I have a heart of iron and stone in my breast.

*Medea:* But why may I not look on him as he dies, and why would such a looking be defilement? Why do I not urge on the bulls against him, and the fierce, earth-born warriors, and the sleepless dragon?

*Herself:* Heaven forefend! And yet that is not matter for my prayers but for my deeds.

*Medea:* Shall I then betray my father's throne? and shall an unknown stranger be preserved by my aid that, when saved by me, he may sail off

<sup>1</sup> The dialogue form is ours; otherwise, the lines are translated as Ovid wrote them.

without me and become another's husband, while I, Medea, am left for punishment? If he can do that, if he can prefer another woman to me, let him perish, ungrateful man.

*Herself:* But no: his look, his loftiness of soul, his grace of form are not such that I need fear deceit or forgetfulness of my service. And he shall give me his pledge beforehand, and I will compel the gods to be witnesses of our troth. Why do you fear when all is safe? Now for action, and away with all delay! Jason shall always owe himself to you, he shall join you to himself in solemn wedlock. Then you shall be hailed as his deliverer through the cities of Greece by throngs of women.

*Medea:* And shall I then sail away and leave my sister here, my brother, father, gods, and native land?

*Herself:* Indeed my father is a stern man, indeed my native land is barbarous, my brother is still a child, my sister's good will is on my side; and the greatest of gods is within me. I shall not be leaving great things, but going to great things: the title of saviour of the Achaean youth, acquaintance with a better land, cities, whose fame is mighty even here, the culture and arts of civilized countries, and the man I would not give in exchange for all that the wide world holds—the son of Aeson: when he is my husband I shall be called the beloved of heaven, I shall raise my head to the stars.

*Medea:* But what of certain mountains, which, they say, come clashing together in mid sea; and Charybdis, the sailor's dread, who now sucks in and again spews forth the waves; and greedy Scylla, girt about with savage dogs, baying in the Sicilian seas?

*Herself:* Nay, holding that which I love, and resting in Jason's arms I shall fare over the long reaches of the sea; in his safe embrace I shall fear nothing; or if I fear at all, I shall fear for my husband only.

*Medea:* But do you call it marriage, Medea, and do you give fair-seeming names to your fault? Nay, rather, look ahead and see how great a wickedness you are approaching and flee it while you may.

Another but more sophisticated maiden, Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, finds herself in a like struggle with a love for her father's enemy, the gratification of which must involve her father's ruin. She looks out from her watch tower and thus argues with herself (viii. 36 ff.):

"Whether I should rejoice or grieve at this woeful war, I cannot tell. I grieve because Minos is the foe of her who loves him; but if there were no war, he would never have been known to me. Suppose he had me as a hostage, then he could give up the war; I should be in his company, should be a pledge of peace. If she who bore you, O loveliest of all the world, was such as you are, good reason was it that the god burned for her. Oh, thrice happy should I be, if only I might fly through the air and stand within the camp of the

Cretan king, and confess my love, and ask what dower he would wish to be paid for me. Only let him not ask my country's citadel. For may all my hopes of wedlock perish ere I gain it by treachery. And yet oftentimes many have found it good to be overcome, when an appeased victor has been merciful. Surely he wages a just war for his murdered son; and he is strong both in his cause and in the arms that defend his cause. We shall be conquered, I am sure. How? if doom awaits our city, why shall his warrior hand unbar these walls of ours, and not my love? Far better will it be without massacre and suspense and the cost of his own blood for him to conquer. In that case truly I should not fear lest someone should pierce your breast unwittingly, dear Minos; for, if not unwitting, who so cruel that he could bring himself to throw his pitiless spear at you?" She likes the plan, and decides to give up herself with her country as her dowry, and so to end the war. But merely to will is not enough. "A watch guards the entry; my father holds the keys of the city gates. Him only do I fear, unhappy! Only he delays the wish of my heart. Would to God I had no father! But surely everyone is his own god; Fortune resists half-hearted prayers. Another girl in my place, fired with so great a love, would long since have destroyed, and that with joy, whatever stood in the way of her love. And why should another be braver than I? Through fire and sword would I dare go. And yet here there is no need of fire or sword. I need but my father's lock of hair. That is to me more precious than gold; that purple lock will make me blest, will give me my heart's desire."

Althaea's struggle is between mother-love for her son and that fierce clan-love for her brothers, whom Meleager, her son, has slain. She stands holding in her hand that fateful billet of wood on the preservation of which her son's life depends, and speaks, partly in soliloquy and partly in apostrophe (viii. 481):

"O ye triple goddesses of vengeance, Eumenides, behold these fearful rites. I avenge and I do a wicked deed: death must be atoned by death; to crime must crime be added, death to death. Through woes on woes heaped up let this accursed house go on to ruin. Shall happy Oeneus rejoice in his victorious son and Thestius be childless? 'Twill be better for you both to grieve. Only do you, my brothers' manes, fresh-made ghosts, appreciate my service, and accept the sacrifice I offer at so heavy cost, the baleful tribute of my womb. Ah me, whither am I hurrying? Brothers, forgive a mother's heart! My hands refuse to finish what they began. I confess that he deserves to die; but that I should be the agent of his death, I cannot bear. And shall he go scathless then? Shall he live, victorious and puffed up with his own success, and lord it in Calydon, while you are naught but a handful of ashes, shivering ghosts? I will not suffer it. Let the wretch die and drag to ruin with him his father's hopes, his kingdom and his fatherland. Where is

my mother-love? Where is a parent's pious care? Where are those pangs which ten long months I bore? O that you had perished in your infancy by those first fires, and I had suffered it! You lived by my gift; now you shall die by your own desert; pay the price of your deed. Give back the life I twice gave you, once at your birth, once when I saved the brand; or else add me to my brothers' pyre. I both desire to act, and cannot. Oh, what shall I do? Now I can see only my brothers' wounds, the sight of that deed of blood: and now love and the name of mother break me down. Woe is me, my brothers! It is ill that you should win; but win you shall; only let me have the solace that I grant to you, and let me follow you!" She spoke, and turning away her face, with trembling hand she threw the fatal billet into the flames. The brand either gave or seemed to give a groan as it was caught and consumed by the unwilling fire.

The singular infatuation of young Narcissus for his own lovely image reflected from the still pool, but which he does not at first realize as his own reflection, offers a paradoxical situation which Ovid dearly loves. He makes the most of this story, both in stage setting and in lines. Of especial interest is the moment when the youth comes to the realization that this is his own image and that he is in love with himself, a realization which serves only to make his hapless case more desperate (iii. 442 ff.):

Did anyone, O ye woods, ever love more cruelly than I? You know, for you have been the favorite haunts of many lovers. Do you in the ages past, for your life is one of centuries, remember anyone who has pined away like this? I am charmed, and I see; but what I see and what charms me I cannot find—so great a delusion holds my love. And, to make me grieve the more, no mighty ocean separates us, no long road, no mountain ranges, no city walls with close-shut gates; by a thin barrier of water we are kept apart. He himself is eager to be embraced. For, often as I stretch my lips towards the lucent wave, so often with upturned face he strives to lift his lips to mine. You would think he could be touched—so small a thing it is that separates our loving hearts. Whoever you are, come forth hither! Why, O peerless youth, do you elude me? or whither do you go when I strive to reach you? Surely my form and age are not such that you should shun them, and me too the nymphs have loved. Some ground for hope you offer with your friendly looks, and when I have stretched out my arms to you, you stretch yours too. When I have smiled, you smile back; and I have often seen tears, when I weep, on your cheeks. My becks you answer with your nod; and, as I suspect from the movement of your sweet lips, you answer my words as well, but words which do not reach my ears.—Oh, I am he! I have felt it, I know now my own image. I burn with love



of my own self; I both kindle the flames and suffer them. What shall I do? Shall I be wooed or woo? Why woo at all? What I desire, I have; the very abundance of my riches beggars me. Oh, that I might be parted from my own body! and, strange prayer for a lover, I would that what I love were absent from me! And now grief is sapping my strength; but a brief space of life remains to me and I am cut off in my life's prime. Death is nothing to me, for in death I shall leave my troubles; I would he that is loved might live longer; now in the death of one two hearts shall die together.

Some of Ovid's stories are very sketchily drawn, apparently not appealing to his artistic sense, and others are most carefully elaborated, with every dramatic value skilfully conserved. The Niobe story is one of these. It also contains a dramatic element not commonly found in ancient stories, a vivid characterization of the persons of the drama. Who has a clear mental picture of Penelope? But Niobe stands out as clear cut as Lady Macbeth. Her reckless pride shows from the first, and even after the death of her seven sons it is unabated (vi. 277 ff.):

She threw herself upon the cold bodies of her sons, wildly giving the last kisses to them all. From them she lifted her bruised arms to high heaven and cried: "Feed now upon my grief, cruel Latona, feed and glut your heart on my sorrow. Yes, glut your bloodthirsty heart! In my seven sons I suffered sevenfold death. Exult, and triumph in your hateful victory. But why victory? In my misery I still have more than you in your felicity. After so many deaths, I triumph still!"

An awful and pathetic contrast to these reckless words comes when, her spirit broken by the death of her six daughters, she pleads pitifully for the last: "Oh, leave me one, the littlest! Of all my many children, the littlest I beg you spare—just one!"

In the Uffizi Gallery may be seen the fragments of the Niobe sculptures by an unknown Greek artist of the fourth century B.C. The piece portraying this particular scene just described by Ovid, of the mother sheltering her youngest daughter, is practically intact, and is so like Ovid's description that it may well have been the inspiration of it. To what extent Ovid is further influenced by ancient art it is the province of another paper than this to discuss.

Perhaps the most human and touching of the great speeches in Ovid's stories, most appealing to that fatherly solicitude which

is the same in all generations, is the pleading of fond paternal love which Phoebus addresses to the heedless Phaëthon. After trying in vain to dissuade the boy from pressing his request to drive the chariot of the sun, Phoebus makes one last appeal (ii. 88 ff.):

But do thou, O son, beware lest I be the giver of a fatal gift to thee, and while still there is time amend thy prayer. Dost thou in sooth seek sure pledges that thou art son of mine? Behold, I give sure pledges by my very fear; I show myself thy father by my fatherly anxiety. See! look upon my face. And oh, that thou couldst look into my heart as well, and understand a father's cares therein. Then look around, see all that the rich world holds, and from those great and boundless goods of land and sea and sky ask anything. Nothing will I deny thee. But this one thing I beg thee not to ask, which, if rightly understood, is a bane instead of blessing. A bane, my Phaëthon, dost thou seek as boon. Why dost thou throw thy coaxing arms about my neck, thou foolish boy? Nay, doubt it not, it shall be given—we have sworn it by the Styx—whatever thou dost choose. But, oh, make wiser choice!

We give two more remarkable and widely contrasting scenes in which human suffering has touched the depths and expresses itself under differing circumstances in its own way. The first is found in the tragic story of Philomela, who has just been ravished by Tereus, her sister's brutal husband. When she has regained her senses and has realized her plight, she cries out upon him (vi. 532 ff.):

Oh, what a horrible thing you have done, barbarous, cruel wretch! Do you care nothing for my father's injunction, his affectionate tears, my sister's love, my own virginity, the bond of wedlock? You have gone against nature: I have become a concubine, my sister's rival; you, a husband to both. Now Procne must be my enemy. Why do you not take my life, that no crime may be left undone, traitor? Aye, would that you had killed me before you wronged me so. Then would my shade have been innocent and clean. If those who dwell on high see these things, if the divinity of the gods has any power, if they and their power have not perished with me, sooner or later I will have vengeance. I will myself cast shame aside and proclaim what you have done. If it should be in my power, I would go where people throng and tell it; if I am kept shut up in these woods, I will fill the woods with my story and move the very rocks to pity. Let the air of heaven hear it, and, if there is any god in heaven, he shall hear it too.

The other portrays the agony of Hercules on Oeta, a scene which had so strong a lure for the ancient classical dramatists. In pathetic contrast between his manifold services to the world and his present sufferings, and in bitter revolt against the injustices of fate, he cries (ix. 182 ff.):

Was it for this I slew Busiris who defiled his temples with strangers' blood? that I deprived the dead Antaeus of his mother's strength? that I did not fear the Spanish shepherd's triple form, nor thy triple form, O Cerberus? Was it for this, O hands, that you broke the strong bull's horns? that Elis knows your toil, the waves of Stymphalus, the Parthenian woods? that by your prowess the gold-wrought girdle of Thermodon was secured, and that fruit guarded by the dragon's sleepless eyes? Was it for this that the centaurs could not prevail against me, nor the boar that wasted Arcady? that it did not avail the hydra to grow by loss and gain redoubled strength? What, that I saw the Thracian's horses fat with human blood and those mangers full of mangled corpses and, seeing, threw them down and slew the master and the steeds themselves? By these arms the monster of Nemea lies crushed; upon this neck I upheld the sky! The cruel wife of Jove is weary of imposing toils; but I am not yet weary of performing them. But now a strange and deadly thing is at me, which neither by strength can I resist, nor yet by weapons nor by arms. Deep through my lungs steals the devouring fire, and feeds through all my frame. But Eurystheus is alive and well! And there are those who can believe that there are gods!

Then follows a tone-colorful descriptive passage, not spoken lines, but a portrayal of the tremendous action of the scene. This description, however, needs to be read aloud or heard, since the appeal of the words is to the ear. It is impossible to translate such a passage into English, since the meaning is more in the sound than in the words themselves. Our best approach to a rendering would be something like this:

You might see him there, oft uttering heart-rending groans, oft roaring in agony, oft struggling to tear off his garments all, uprooting great trunks of trees, raging and stretching his arms to mountains or native skies.

But the full effect may be had only by reading the original aloud:

saepe illum gemitus edentem, saepe frementem,  
saepe retemptantem totas infringere vestes  
sternentemque trabes irascentemque videres  
montibus aut patrio tendentem brachia caelo.

How, then, has Ovid succeeded in presenting this great series of more or less unrelated stories, not as a tale that is told, but as a vivid dramatic narrative which rarely fails to grip and hold the interest of the reader? And not in the *Metamorphoses* alone, but how in the *Heroides* has he made his heroines speak, not as mythological creatures, living in some unreal place, at some incredibly far-away time, but as real, human women, living and suffering here and now? How has he treated so naturally dry and technical a theme as the *Fasti* so that even this poem pulses with human interest? How has he, even in exile, heart-broken and forgotten by the world he loved, so pictured his wretched surroundings, so dramatized his own woe that the letters even of a Cicero, written also from exile, pale beside these letters in significance and effect?

It is because the poet never loses sight of the realm of *feeling*, that highest element in, and most effective inspiration of dramatic action. It is because he possesses to a high degree, as we have shown in a previous paper, the creative imagination, the prime essential in the furnishing forth of the poet, whose very name proclaims him "creator." This creative imagination clothes inanimate things for Ovid with personality, summons to his presence him who is far distant or long since dead, so grasps the hidden relations between objects that the name of one suggests the other, sees resemblances between seemingly unlike things and uses these to enhance the beauty, the clearness, the strength, either or all, of a given locution, even makes the sound of words reproduce their sense, applies adjectives in an unusual and subtly illuminating manner, making the substantive phrase stand out in stereoscopic clearness, and in addition to all this it clothes his characters for him with life, so that in all situations he not merely describes a scene as done, but sees and hears and *feels* it in the doing.